



New Internationalist

The people, the ideas, the action in the fight for global justice

Brazil



New Internationalist Easier English
Ready Intermediate Lesson

Today's lesson:



Speaking / reading about

Brazil: general information

Vocabulary from the texts

Predicting / reading 4 stories from Brazil

Speaking: role play

What do you know about Brazil? Discuss:

- Leader?
- Economy?
- Money?
- Main exports?
- Population?
- Health?
- Environment?
- Religion(s)?



- Language(s)?
- Income distribution?
- Literacy / education?
- Life expectancy?
- Position of women?
- Freedom eg. for sexual minorities?

(then read next 2 slides to check)

Economy 7th largest in the world, but decreasing from 2015. GNI per person \$11,530 (Argentina \$13,480, Bolivia \$2,870, United States \$55,200). Many different areas: agricultural, mining, manufacturing and service.

Money Real (plural Reais). Brazil has the highest interest rates in the world (14.25% per annum), but inflation is still more than ten per cent.

Main exports iron ore, soybeans, sugar, poultry, vehicles. Coffee, once Brazil's top product, is now only 3% of exports.

Population 206.1 m, including almost 900,000 indigenous people. Less than 1% are immigrants. Population growth per year 0.9%. People per sq km 25 (UK 267). Brazilians are a mixture of many indigenous people, African slaves from many different countries, Portuguese settlers, and European and Japanese immigrants.

Health 15 infant deaths for 1,000 live births (Argentina 11, Bolivia 31, US 6). Lifetime chance of maternal mortality 1 in 780 (Portugal 1 in 8,800). HIV 0.6%. Recent problems with the Zika virus.

Environment The Amazon basin is half of Brazil's total area and influences rainfall in other regions. A third of the population live in the Northeast, which is very dry. Brazil has 12% of the world's fresh water, but deforestation of the Amazon forest and other trees, by big agricultural companies, is causing more climate change and more extreme weather.

Religion Catholic 65%, Protestant, including Pentecostal, 22%. Other religions, including Afro-religions, 5%. Non-religious 8%.

Language Portuguese (official). 246 indigenous groups speak more than 150 languages.

Income distribution This is better in the last 12 years but still one of the world's biggest gaps between rich and poor. The top 10% are 42 times richer than the bottom 10%. There's a lot of gun crime and violence because of inequality.

Literacy / education Literacy is officially 91%, but about 18% of adults only read and write very badly. All children aged 6 – 14 must now go to school. In 2012 they introduced quotas for black and indigenous students at federal universities.

Life expectancy 75 years (Argentina 76, Bolivia 68, US 79). Families are having a lot less children, so there is now a bigger proportion of older people.

Position of women President Dilma Rousseff, elected for the second time in 2014, was Brazil's first woman president, but there are not many other women in government. There is a lot of violence against women, especially in rural areas.

Freedom No formal media censorship, but there are many threats to journalists and assassinations, mostly involving police and politicians in smaller towns. The biggest Gay Pride Parade in the world is in São Paulo. There are gay people on TV soaps, but there is still a lot of homophobia. Homophobia is not a crime because conservative Pentecostals have stopped this law going through government.

Match the titles to the photos and discuss what you think the 4 stories are about:

1/ Brazil human rights defender found drowned in dam

2/ Abuse of women in Brazil

3/ Brazil: artists against the impeachment

4/ Are we going to sit and wait for the next mine waste disaster?

a)



c)



b)



d)

Vocabulary – match:

1/ impeachment

2/ to drown

3/ mining waste

4/ abuse

5/ indigenous

6/ a coup

7/ hydro-electric
dam

8/ evacuation

9/ toxic

*a) suddenly taking the power of a government
(illegally)*

b) accusing a public official of a crime

c) native

*d) poisonous – you can die from it because it's so
dangerous*

e) to die because you cannot breathe in water

*f) making everyone leave a place (eg. an area, a
school or a station) because of a problem*

*g) a very big construction that holds back the
water – the water then falls to create electricity*

h) bad, violent treatment of a person or an animal

*i) extra, unwanted material from mining (often
toxic)*

Speaking / reading: True or False?

First discuss, then read the 4 texts (next 4 slides) quickly – 1 minute each – to check

- 1) Nilce was murdered and thrown into the water because she protested about the building of the dam.
- 2) The 'safe house' Casa Noeli dos Santos helps many women find husbands.
- 3) Most artists in Brazil support Temer and don't support Dilma Rousseff.
- 4) 600 people died when a dam collapsed in Minas Gerais, Brazil.

1/ Human rights defender found drowned in dam

Nilce de Souza Magalhães worked to defend human rights. She protested against Usina Hidrelétrica Jirau (a rock-fill dam in north-western Brazil) for three years. Last week, they found her body. She drowned in the hydro-electric dam: a man who said he wanted to 'silence' her murdered her in January 2016. On 21 June, dam workers found her body on the river bank of the dam. Her hands and feet were tied with ropes to large rocks. This kept her body deep under water for six months.

Brazil is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for people who work to defend people's right to land. In 2016, Front Line Defenders has reported almost 30 killings of environmental, indigenous, and land rights defenders in Brazil – Nilce is the 27th. In 2015, *Global Witness* said Brazil was the most dangerous country in the world for people who defend environment rights.



2/ Abuse of women in Brazil



Brazil has the seventh-highest rate of violence against women in the world. A woman is attacked every 15 seconds and a woman is murdered every two hours. Since 1985, 92,000 women have died, often killed by a husband, partner or family member. Fran is a shy, quiet 25-year-old. She lives in the violent city of Ariquemes in Rondonia, northern Brazil. Many women like her have been saved there because of a small safe house, Casa Noeli dos Santos. 'Without the safe house, I'd be dead,' she says. And she's not alone.

Casa Noeli is a small house with two bedrooms, an open living room, kitchen and vegetable area. It opened in 2011 for women running away from violent men. The Anglican Service of Diakonia and Development (SADD), supported by Christian Aid, supports the house. There are a few more safe houses in this big country, but only 2.5 per cent of cities have this kind of service. 10 women and their children can live there at one time. It helps women from a population of 150,000 people, from 8 different cities. There are pictures on the walls by the children who have lived here with their mothers. There are coloured walls and colourful covers on the sofas and photos of smiling women on a noticeboard. It could be someone's home. But the locked front gate and electric fence across the top of the high wall around the house protect it. Fran, a mother-of-two, came to Casa Noeli a year ago to escape her violent husband. He is now waiting for his trial for 12 murders – including Fran's father and brother.

Fran is not the only woman. Reverend Elineide Ferreira Oliveira, 29 has managed Casa Noeli since it opened. She also has her story of violence. Her sister Eliane, 35, was stabbed 7 times by her ex-husband when she asked for a divorce more than 15 years ago. Thankfully, she survived. Eliane now works with Reverend Elineide and the psychologist, Lucimere. Every week, women who have nowhere to go come to the home. Some women come because the police or social services tell them about the home. The women get psychological support and learn how to get basic state benefits. Each woman stays a maximum of three months. They still get care and support after they leave. So there are never too many women there. The women were often dependent on their partners for money. This forced them to stay in violent relationships. But Reverend Elineide and her team help the women learn new skills, eg. baking and handicrafts, so they can make their own money.

A local police officer said: 'Brazil is a very violent country. Violence against women is part of that, and our legal system doesn't always work. Brazilian society is very macho, but since this law, things have started to change. Men still believe that women are their property, and this happens in all parts of society, from lawyers to manual labourers.'

Reverend Elineide knows that we need people to change attitudes towards women, to protect their rights. 'The law could make things better, but it will take some time,' she says. 'They have to see that violence against women is serious. But even in the court system, some judges or lawyers say that it's a private problem when a husband and wife fight - we have no right to do anything. Many people think violence is normal – it's not.'

So until the law protects women, we have safe houses like Casa Noeli. They offer vulnerable women the chance to protect their children and control some parts of their lives.



3/ Artists against the impeachment

‘Temer Out!’ ‘Against the Coup!’ and ‘Culture and Work!’ These are some of the signs all over the walls of the Ministry of Culture building in San Paulo. Visual artists, filmmakers, designers, dancers, actors and many others took over the building more than a month ago. They are still there protesting against the impeachment. Many people say the impeachment is a coup.

‘We artists, and the people of the country’s democracy, do not accept this new government and its control,’ said Cesar Haber Paelornik, a graphic designer and part of the occupation.

The Senate voted to stop Dilma Rousseff being president and put her on trial for impeachment in May. Michel Temer has been running the government since then. Many political analysts do not understand this. Many Brazilians are angry. Rousseff is one of the few Brazilian politicians who has not been charged with corruption. The charge is that Dilma changed budget numbers before the last national elections to cover up Brazil’s failing economy. But most people say this was a mistake in administration and is not something that should cause impeachment. So the opposition PMDB party came to power for the first time in more than 12 years. Since 2003, the party has lost four elections to the left-wing Workers’ Party (PT). In the latest election, in 2014, Rousseff was elected president for the second time.

Temer is very unpopular and he would have almost no chance of winning in a national election. In polls two weeks ago, only 11.3 per cent of Brazilians support Temer’s acting government.

‘If you remove someone from power who was chosen in a democratic election, that’s a coup,’ said Gabriela Campus, a sculptor in the occupation, ‘I support the return of Dilma ... I support her because I don’t support a coup.’

Not all occupiers and protesters in Brazil agree that Rousseff should come back to power. Many people do not trust the president and want new elections. But they all agree that they do not want Temer’s government. In the last month, artists have had cultural events every day in the space they occupy. They are trying to bring Brazilians together to fight against the impeachment and tell people about the situation in Brazil. They have concerts, theatre, dance and lectures – and lively politics.

4/ Are we going to sit and wait for the next mine waste disaster?



‘If the dam had collapsed at night, everyone would have died,’ said Duarte Junior, a mayor of a city down the river. The Samarco mine waste dam collapsed last month in Minas Gerais, in southwestern Brazil.

The village of Bento Rodrigues was covered by toxic mine waste on 5 November; 16 people died and more than 600 people lost their homes. The dam collapsed in the afternoon, and people told others to leave as they saw the waves of waste coming. The town had no alarm system. It is below a giant earthen mine waste dam, and it did not have an evacuation plan.

The waste destroyed the town, then went down the Doce River. Two weeks later it got to the Atlantic Ocean. Nilo Candido da Silva has lived there his whole life. He told Reuters: ‘I don’t think I’ll ever see it go back to normal.’ He watched the river get full of red-brown mine waste. Then most of the water disappeared and it was only the brown mine waste.

Dilma Rousseff, Brazilian president, promised justice. She has sued the mining company, Vale and BHP Billiton, to get a lot of money to clean up the area. But Brazil often does not enforce environmental laws or action against companies that break the laws.

Why do we wait for a disaster to think about the risk? The Doce River is only one of many rivers that have been destroyed forever by mining. In British Columbia, the Mount Polley mine’s waste dam collapsed in 2014. This was further up the great Fraser River in the salmon run; the salmon are finding it difficult to survive; and so are the First Nations and people who sell the salmon. In August in Durango, Mexico, a mine dam overflowed and two billion cubic meters of water with cyanide went into the La Cruz river. When mines grow, the waste grows too. And we need the largest dams in the world to keep the waste back. As the dams get older, they have problems. Scientists say we can expect many more mine dam failures in the next few years. Many rivers and ecosystems are at risk.

Now read the 4 stories in more detail to fill these gaps in the summaries:



1) Human rights defender found drowned in dam:

a) Who killed Nilce?

b) Why?

c) What is the bigger problem?

2) Abuse of women in Brazil:

a) Why are Fran and Eliane at Casa Noeli?

b) How does Casa Noeli help?

c) What is the bigger problem?

3) Artists against the impeachment:

a) Why are the artists protesting?

b) What are the artists doing to protest?

c) What is the bigger problem?

4) Mine waste disaster:

a) What happened when the dam collapsed in Minas Gerais?

b) Who is responsible for this?

c) What is the bigger problem?

Role-play:

a) You work at the 'Brazil Information Office'. Try to answer all the questions people ask you about Brazil.

b) You want to find out as much information about Brazil as possible because you are thinking of getting a job there. Go to the 'Brazil Information Office' and ask questions.



Homework:



Here are links to the complete articles – read them, then click on the link to the original article at the bottom and read that too:

- [https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Country profile: Brazil](https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Country_profile:_Brazil)
- [https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Abuse of women in Brazil](https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Abuse_of_women_in_Brazil)
- [https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Are we going to sit and wait for the next mine waste disaster%3F](https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Are_we_going_to_sit_and_wait_for_the_next_mine_waste_disaster%3F)
- [https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Human rights defender found drowned in dam](https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Human_rights_defender_found_drowned_in_dam)
- [https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Brazil: artists against the impeachment](https://eewiki.newint.org/index.php/Brazil:_artists_against_the_impeachment)